



The Plymouth in Blue

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Susanna was running towards home as the sky gaped and water plunged down, bending the teaks, wetting the grass, sprouting tea puddles on the rough roads, feeding the lakes, and driving the cows into their barns. It had been six months since it rained after Abbu's death. She remembered how Ammu used to hurry her quiet pace to the balcony as soon as the gunmetal sky opened up. But after Abbu's death, the jolliness in her face turned into moths that drifted towards fire. The grief was like a traveler that had come uninvited and it had seeped into her like excess tea leaves bitterly plaguing a cup of tea. Susanna knocked on the mahogany door as it still was raining, and her hunchbacked grandfather opened it. "Who are you?" he asked.

She made a familiar hand gesture to remind him that she was his granddaughter. It took him some 5 minutes to process.

Recognising her, he signaled her to come in with a teak cane that he always carried.

Alzheimer's sucked the memory out of her Dada and wrapped the old man in its embrace so that she and Ammu didn't have to listen to his unending taunts about drifting between identities. Ammu was Jordanian while Abbu was Tamil.

Susanna often thought if God could let her speak then she would have spoken broken fragments of them. The Tamil letters would have climbed onto the Jordanian and left only when they were done strangling them to death. Or vice versa. Thank God she couldn't speak. The rainfall had turned the house with mosaic floor stone cold. The cold floor soothed her mud coated feet while she cruised towards her room upstairs. Maybe the coldness had frozen the memories of her father's, wherever they were lodged in- the dining table, the reading nook, the verandah, the mahogany bed in his bedroom, the little Jam Factory at the yard that he used to own, and also, it had frozen Ammu's minuscule amount of love for a dumb child.

Ammu ignored Dada after he was diagnosed with his stressful disease, which was relaxing for her in all means. She wasn't clutched by the duty to respect him anymore even though his machine gun words used to pummel her down to the ground when his neurons used to hold memories like glue. She used to dance in Tamil style to Jordanian folk song. Maybe the fusion had excited her. But Abbu took her hobby wrapped away with him in white cotton and finally into the river as ashes.

Shivering in the cold that the rainfall had sunk into Susanne, she went to

Ammu's room mostly to grab a towel and partly to arrest her attention. She saw her wear her bindi like crown and drape herself in a crimson saree. Surprised, she lightly pulled on her saree and in a mute language, queried where she was going. It was the only language she could sail without getting anchor in an ocean of verbs, nouns, and adjectives of Arabian and Tamil. As usual, Ammu fixed her gaze on her for a second and then shifted her glance back again to the mirror. Susanna then slid out of the room in a quiet language while Ammu's gaze was fixed on herself as she applied the lipstick on her lips.

Susanna ran the towel over her body and sat beside the fireplace. Dada wasn't there in his usual spot because he was busy running after the gardener Yadav with his cane. Probably an old memory of Yadav trimming the wrong patch of land had knocked the old guy hard with its stronger cane. Susanna let the amber fire baptize her with its might. She wanted to block out everything around her but Dada's cuss words against Yadav were flying out in all directions. From ceiling to mosaic to chandeliers to stair cases, they flew everywhere.

Disturbed, Susanna headed out to Abbu's Jam factory at their yard, which used to skyrocket its sales by foreign jam recipes. It was still raining. As if the god of rain had bottled his anger for six months

and let it all out then. The quietness inside the factory reminded her of Abbu's presence. It reminded her of the loving heart that he had for her. It was happiness and sadness all at once. His absence hit her with its spades until she collapsed bleeding. And nostalgia dipped in sweetness squirted its tranquilisers on her body. She tried to sleep on a cot inside the factory, tucking an old worn out blanket over her to sleep in silence, her language, and Abbu's blurry presence. Right then, a car horn exploded into her reality, and she jumped out of the cot, running towards the driveway.

She saw a blue Plymouth rev its engine. Ammu draped in the crimson saree was getting in it with all her belongings as a man in a jacket helped her load them.

Susanne was under her umbrella. Ammu didn't care to take one. She got wet. The man clutched her in a hug, and the sound of their laughter stung her. For her, it was too much to process. The shock had paralysed her, and she was late in approaching them. The Plymouth sped into the distance as their silhouettes made love, and it sent crashing tea waves at her feet.

In her silent language, she was screaming for Ammu—silent verbs and adjectives bleeding into each other, tossing themselves far away, sprouting up a warzone, and running out of silence.